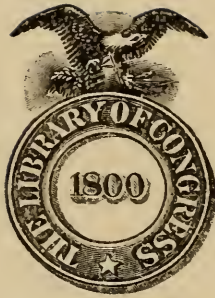


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A FARMER'S MUSINGS

ALFRED LLEWELLYN FRENCH



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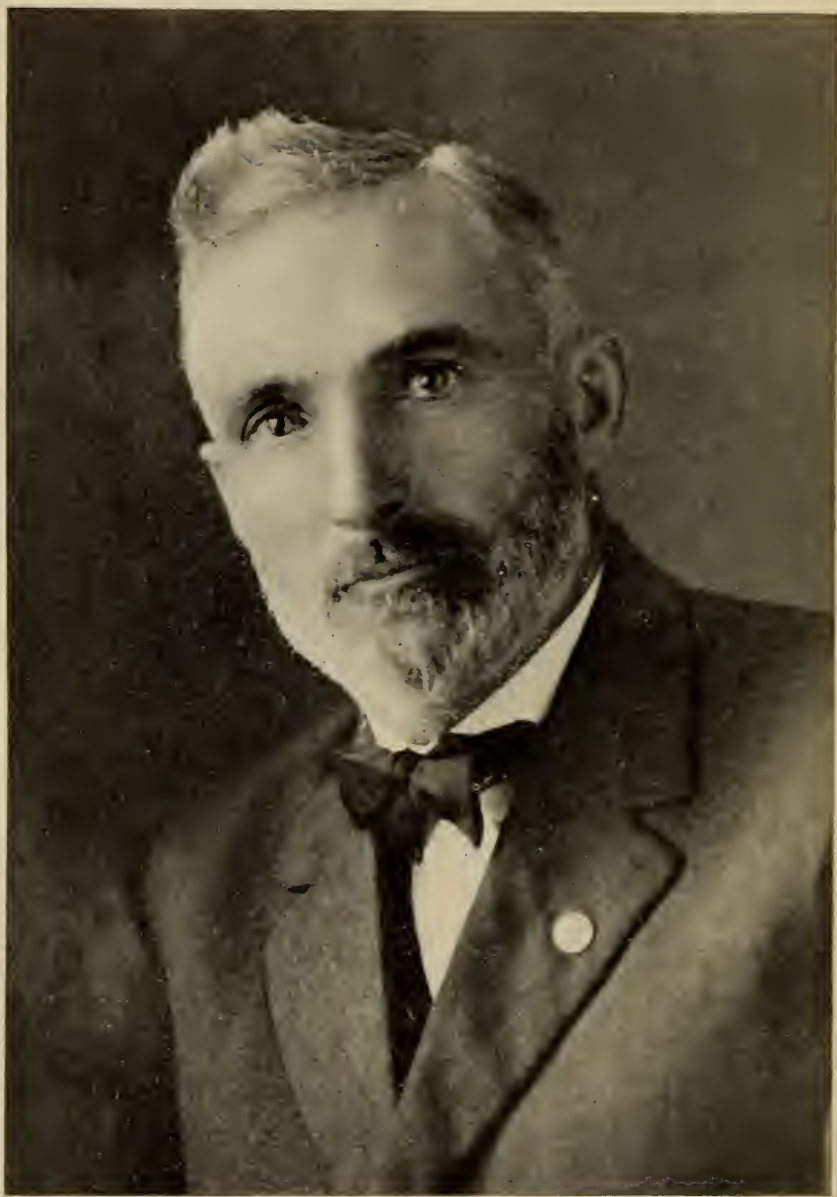
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A FARMER'S MUSINGS

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ALFRED LLEWELLYN FRENCH

A FARMER'S MUSINGS

Poems

OF

ALFRED LLEWELLYN FRENCH



1920

EDWARDS & BROUGHTON PRINTING CO.
RALEIGH

PS 3511
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1920



*With every passing year comes
brighter, truer, stronger glimpses
of the character of her to whom
this little book is dedicated.*

MY MOTHER

My Mother—

*In whose veins there flowed,
strong and unadulterated,
The blood of those who, through
privations grievous—
Through cold, famine, pestilence,
and harassed by savage foes—
Gave birth to the greatest nation
earth has ever known,
A toast to you.*

My Mother—

*Who, while yet a girl in years,
gave me birth;
Loved me as only those with
courage strong can love;
Taught me three things: to be—
honest, clean and courageous.
Strengthening precept by the mighty
power of example—
With love ever new.*

My Mother—

*Who, when came sickness, poverty
and times most sore,
Gave not a sign of feeble
weakening,
But with head high, and mind
alert, battled for her own,
And through it all ceased not
to be her merry self—
Strong through and through.*

My Mother—

*Who, when to young manhood's years
I'd come,
Did not sit by with folded hands,
and let me go;
But with rare tact and wisdom,
almost akin to foresight,
Did encourage, shame and argue
to keep me in her way—
You were all true.*

My Mother—

*Who, when thieving death,
in passing by,
Snatched all, save one, of
hers most dear,
Did not leave all to mourn
her grievous loss,
But sought in others lives the
place that hurt, to soothe the pain—
'Tis well with you.*

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PART ONE

NATURE THOUGHTS

Nature, in her moods and passion,
Gives us food for thought each day;
Carries us to heights at sunrise
When her lord assumes his sway;
Thrills us, when at eve in glory,
She bids him take himself away;
Soothes us with her cheery raindrops,
Her April showers and rainbows gay;
Teases from us adulation
When on green fields shadows play;
Awes us, when before her fury
Forest monarchs must give way;
Filches from us grudging homage,
While floods rush past so angrily;
Gives to snowclad mount a grandeur
That tunes our hearts to joyful lay.

THE OLD SPRING

From underneath a rough built casement,
Formed of rocks from out the creek bed,
Comes a stream of purest water
 Gently ever bubbling up.

Shaded first by strands of ivy—
Twined about like arms of lovers—
Then by stately swaying pine trees,
 Lies a battered rusty cup.

After hours of tedious riding
Under sun of southern splendor
I, with sighs of satisfaction,
 Drink there like a thirsty pup.

Then I stretch me on the greensward
Midst the bugs and toads and beetles,
And, with naught a care or sorrow,
 To meditation give me up.

A SPRINGTIME THOUGHT

This springtime night at Sunny Home
Makes me wish to take my staff and roam
Far afield, where meadows green—
Washed by dashing showers and gay—
Seem not a thing of grass and clay,
But more a living carpet robe
Set there to hide a naked globe
And make it seem the thing it's not;
A playground that the gods have bought
And called their minstrels from afar
To sing a line, then chant a bar,
Where Winter grim, with frost and snow,
Held pride of place a month ago.

Methinks that on that hill of green—
Where night has set its kindly screen
And stars alone stand guard—
There might come to my mind a thought
Of the riches grass and grain have brought;
And I might perchance find simple words
To tell how, with grass and grain and herds,
Other hills now bleak and bare
Might some measure of this richness share
And become a joy to passers by—
Glad beauty spots to fill the eye—
Instead of, as they now appear,
Poor, cold, desolate and drear.

DROPS OF RAIN

Music sweet you are to me,
Dripping from each roof and tree;
Life blood of the growing grain,
Sparkling, cheering drops of rain.

Kisses cool for parched blade
Nestling on a heated glade;
Carrying beauty in your train,
Precious, priceless drops of rain.

Baptism to a waiting earth,
Keen to bring new plants to birth:
Holding hope for barren plain,
Welcome, always drops of rain.

THE YELLOW DAFFODIL

When old winter keeps on coming
At the time he's done enough
Crowding back the springtime
With its liberating stuff,
One needs for patient waiting
Some reminder that the days
Of April showers and sunshine
Return again always.

The Master of creation—
Realizing need of human hope—
Knowing how all humans suffer
If deprived of some such "dope,"
Has provided this reminder
That he's caring for us still.
You can't guess it, so I'll tell you,
'Tis the yellow daffodil.

Shooting up along the hedgerow
Or other warm abandoned place,
This happy winter chaser
Lifts to us her smiling face.
Standing by belated snow bank,
Caring naught for frosts that chill,
She's a hardy little beauty,
Our plucky daffodil.

And when her work is finished,
 When she's tided o'er the span
 And turned a human "critter"
 Into a smiling joyous man,
 Then she takes on somber colors
 And retires from off the hill
 For she knows her place—this beauty—
 This early daffodil.

SPRING

Softly wooing comes the Springtime
 Swiftly crossing hill and dale,
 Gently coaxing bud and leaflet,
 Heeding not Old Winter's wail.

Raindrops falling through the sunshine
 Urging young things on to grow,
 Making green the barren places,
 And in the sky a gorgeous bow.

Lambs so sportive on the hillside,
 Wild flowers blooming 'neath their feet,
 Song birds cooing to their nestmates,
 In tones so tender, low and sweet.

Love we all the gladsome springtime—
 Earth's re-robing gentlest day—
 Time for strenuous work of building,
 Time for thoughts of love and play.

SUMMER

Laden with the breath of roses,
The sweet perfume of meadow poses,
And songs of birds in swaying tree.
You come my Summer day to me.

Carrying on your face a smile
That shortens many a weary mile,
And bringeth joy to those who see.
You come my Summer day to me.

Or if you come with face in tears,
You're but carrying out the plan of years
When thus, with cheer to blade and tree,
You come my Summer day to me.

And if you come with tempest wild—
Cause shattered tree and billows piled—
'Tis thus to make me strong to be.
You come my Summer day to me.

AUTUMN

The Summer's charms have gone their way.
The perfume of flowers and new mown hay
Have passed along with the songs of birds.
A chill at night wakes the drowsy herds.

The Summer's hopes with us remain.
The tasks performed, the mental strain
Brought their reward of shock and stack,
So who would win the summer back?

And the Autumn's joys, who can deny?
The scarlet leaf 'gainst a pale blue sky,
The hush of the night, the frosty morn.
The bay of the hound at the call of horn.

WINTER

A sweep of the north wind
O'er valley and hill;
A grip on the waters
Of river and rill;
A storm cloud, low lying,
Well laden with snow.
Good-bye now, fair Autumn.
'Tis your time to go.

A stirring of life-blood.
A quickening of pace;
The children so merry,
And keen for a race;
A battle in progress,
With snowballs for shells,
"Hurrah!" shouts the school boy,
"Some Winter," he yells.

A blaze in the fireplace,
A low, easy chair;
Corn cribs well laden,
And hay stacks to spare.
Real troubles, not many,
And blessings, not few;
So Winter, at farm home
There's a welcome for you.

MAY DAY

May Day! when blossoms gay
Bedeck the trees and invite away
To orchard-lanes,
Where nectar sweet, in flowered cup,
Tolls bees and other insects up,
Pledging to each a tiny sup;
Asking of each, if he doesn't mind,
To leave some pollen there behind
That he has brushed from other flower
On his gay trip this morning hour.

May Day! few other days so fair,
Nature all in best repair
In wood and field,
Song birds nesting in the trees,
Clover swaying in the breeze,
Grain crops well nigh to the knees,
Promising a bounty soon
That will cheer the harvest moon
And ensure to humans and to kind
A happy, merry winter time.

May Day! May many yet
Come to cheer lest we forget
Kind Nature's gifts,
And fail to render as her due
Homage high and pure and true
As life's field we travel through;
Or cease to think of her as friend
From Springtime to the old year end
Nature, that, on this May Day
Has carried us from self away.

THE COMING OF THE DAWN

From out the night a paleness grows,
Like candle light or far-off snows,
Then shades of gold their places seek,
As faintest blush on maiden's cheek.

More swiftly now as chargers gay,
Come the harbingers of day,
Each in its turn more glorious—bright,
'Till all abroad is God's sunlight.

FALLING OF THE SHACKLES

March 26th

Falling now from blades the shackles,
Winter's cold had thought to keep;
Emerald tints to grain and meadows.
Coming swiftly while we sleep.

Brown and sere through months of freezing,
Struggled on the plucky blade,
'Till at last the smile of springtime
Brought relief o'er hill and glade.

Tender as a mother's nursing
Comes the balmy zephyr's call,
Vieing with the touch of sunshine
Lest the tender blade should fall.

Cheered on by "knee deep" of bull frog—
Making merry half the night—
The gentle blade looks up serenely
And takes dew kisses as her right.

What more sweet in all earth's story—
Told with each recurring spring—
Than the blade's strong struggle upward,
Beauty and great wealth to bring?

EARTH'S RICHES

Mother Earth holds stores of riches,
Of some of which I fain would tell—
Riches that are sadly needed
To regulate the H. C. L.;
Riches not of mine or forest,
Not of factory or mill,
But riches that are closely hidden
In fertile field or grass-clad hill;

Riches that the reaper gathers
As it breasts the golden waves,
That the meadow yields up gladly
As Summer sun the mower braves;
Spoils the kine delight to gather
On their march o'er hill and vale
And give at morn and nightfall
To fill to brim the foaming pail.

Massive ears the maize plant quarries
Bit by bit the Summer through,
As it digs deep in the brown loam
In storm or when the skys are blue;
Products that the garden fertile
Holds within its warm rich mould;
That do their bit to cheer in summer
Or later, when the days grow cold.

A Farmer's Musings

All of these, her hidden treasures,
Our mother holds in bounteous store
And grudges not to one her riches,
Who's willing to unlock the door.
But by the door she stands majestic
And says to all the human race,
"Before you enter here to gather
Show me the sweat upon your face.

Think you not to bring a brother
And, pointing to *his* toil-stained hands,
Say, "Mother Earth, here's a good fellow
I've thought would do to till your lands.
I'm a gentleman by nature,
Used not to toil of hand or brain,
So, when *he* has toiled a season,
I'll be on hand to take the gain."

THE "MEADOWS"

Not once, but many times, I've wished
That more could view the "Meadows" fair
 As it lies, this day in May,
An undulating piece of God's best work
 In making soil of Southern clay.

It would, methinks, cause other hearts
To beat a livelier tune and merry be,
 Could they but glimpse the fields of grain,
The pastures fair, the meadows green,
 And—coming down the hill—the evening train.

And strange must be the man or maid,
Whose joy would not the stronger grow,
 Could they but sense the charm and thrill
That comes when "Bonnie Blacks," or kine
 With faces white, come drifting o'er the hill.

Then, as the evening shadows fall
O'er town and valley, while I look,
 The hope gains voice that more may taste,
And learn the joy that comes to him,
 Who, sowing grass, reclaims a barren waste.

FAIR LESPEDEZA

Gentle creeper, Lespedeza,
Greatest all among the Legumes
Sent to earth to save the Southland,
Sent to heal its broken hillsides,
To bring riches to its valleys
And a robe to sun-scorched plain.

Queen you are, Fair Lespedeza,
Among the plants, that all unbidden,
Awake from out their winter slumber,
To bring verdure to the pasture
And a mantle to the roadside,
Where the Frost King's hand has lain.

Stronger yet, our Lespedeza,
Have you grown in times more recent
Since we've learned to store your richness—
Gathered from the rain and sunshine—
To make glad and tide the season
'Till the spring has come again.

Sweep on, modest Lespedeza,
'Till all out land from the Potomac
To the Father of the Waters
Has felt the strong rejuvenation
Of your nodules and your humus,
And our poor soil curse you've slain.

WHERE THE TENDER BLUE GRASS GROWS

If you wish to feel the morning
In all its beauty and repose,
Greet it out among the mountains,
Where the tender blue grass grows.

And could you forget a springtime
Seen in its most winning pose,
Greet it among the mountain valleys,
Where the tender blue grass grows?

The Summer, too—as I recall it,
Offers much of joy to those
Who, on pleasure's quest, go larking,
Where the tender blue grass grows.

And the splendor of the Autumn,
As with brilliant tints it glows,
Should be viewed from off a hilltop
Where the tender blue grass grows.

And when hill and vale and mountain
Are robed with fleecy, glistening snows,
Grandeur then has reached its fruiting,
Where the tender blue grass grows.

A PASSING DAY

The day that's done was of wondrous brightness,
 Ushered in at the East with a blood-red flame.
 Then the great golden disk—with the world's swift gay
 turning—
 Was started upon its age-old scorching game.

Higher it rose and hotter its breath came,
 'Till the leaves and grass lost their sparkle of dew;
 The cattle sought shelter 'neath the wide spreading oak
 tree
 And song birds with sadness to seclusion withdrew.

The tender wee blades, that all night had been smiling
 With the kiss of the dew that gave freshness like rain,
 Were withered and drooping and well nigh heart broken
 As the Sun-god blazed forth full master again.

Now a change has come o'er the face of all nature,
 A respite, and we smile at the sun's mighty power.
 We're turning away from his fierceness and anger;
 For the day is far spent, 'tis the calm evening hour.

A great moon is rising far out in the heavens,
 And soon will it throw soft shadows around.
 Crickets and katydids and other gay night folks
 Proclaim that much gladness at night times abound.

* * * * *

A sweet languor warns that the night is swift passing;
 The moon looks down calmly and invites us to rest,
 The tasks of today will look small with the morning,
 When greater are shouldered with courage and zest.

THE GIFT OF THE MORNING

From off the Blue Ridge Mountains
Came a cloud, low swung, black and gray.
As a monster bird it came swooping,
Blotting out the fast fading day.

Swift came the night of winter
As a silent soft footed beast.
Not a bough that stirred, not a sound was heard
As the cloud made its flight to the East.

Then came the snow, fine, sifting
Down through the coal-black night—
As a ghost unchained on its nightly jaunt—
'Till the earth had a mantle of white.

From out of the East swept the morning
As a bride to her wedding so gay,
And brought as a gift to earth creatures
A marvelous jewel display.

Over each hill and deep hollow;
O'er each bending blade and each tree
Lay a mantle of white, diamond studded,
A sight worth a fortune to see.

WHEN THE RHODODENDRON BLOOM

I know a dark, secluded valley,
O'er hung with vine and spreading tree,
Where a noisy spring stream tavel,
Hustling on with crazy glee.

Wild flowers in the spring grow rampant
On the spots the sun makes warm.
Here too, one sees the lizard darting,
And the "cotton tails" neat form.

Song birds to their mates coo softly,
Making homes midst boughs of green,
Far back in the depths of woodland
Where they hope to stay unseen.

June brings charm to any valley,
But to mine a feast 'twill bring,
For 'twill order "open sesame"
Where buds of rhododendron cling.

Then will fall a cloak of beauty,
O'er the valley like a shower,
Giving to those rugged hillsides
A taste of Nature's mighty power.

* * * * *

June will bring to field and valley,
Pastures fair and ripening grain,
Meadows, and the charm of reaping,
Cattle grazing on the plain.

But all these will be forgotten,
When kindly shower and season brings
Life and beauty to those hillsides,
Where the rhododendron clings.

THE RAINBOW

The sun is making its beat to the west
A spatter of rain passes by;
The dart from a sunbeam pierces a drop
And behold, a great bow in the sky—
A thing of such beauty but seldom beheld
The work of a great God on high.
Its blending of colors no painter could match,
No architect its plans could supply.
A bow of perfection, no flaws for detection
In this work of the Maker on high.

THE FLOOD

From morn till nightfall
Then from night till morn again,
Descended the rain on mountain and hill,
 A steady, swift downpour from dark leaden sky.

The song of the rivulet
Met the roar of the waterfall;
The lashing and crashing in forest and thicket
 Was drowned by the forces that battled on high.

Down the side of the mountain
And from off every hillside
Rushed great sheets of water colored with clay,
 As though all things human it were bound to defy.

The night fell with darkness
Like unto the region
Where dwell all creatures eternally damned,
 Water only, made tossing, was discerned by the eye.

Came again the glad morning
And with it the sunshine,
Lighting up a strange world with water made mad—
 Every creek a broad river rushing on swiftly by

Down into the valley,
With its meadows and corn fields,
Swept a thousand swift torrents from out of the hills
 Like a burst of wild cursing with none to reply.

The broad placid river,
In the heart of the valley
Raised like a serpent its great glistening head
And covered the face of the valley well nigh.

The spring brought a covering
Of green to the valley
And again smiled the stretches of meadow and corn
But God only can find the dead where they lie.

DIXIE WINTER

Fickle art thou, Dixie Winter,
Promising one hour the Springtime—
With its dashing showers and rainbows—
Then forgetting e'er the nightfall
And go flirting with the North Wind
Changing all to gloom and gray.

Will you not e'er learn the lesson,
Taught by cousins in the North-land,
Who have studied through the ages—
Tutored by the hoary Frost King—
How a modest, comely Winter
Should maintain her dignity;

How when once she'd clothed the green fields
With a mantle white and fleecy;
Changed the river to paved highways
And the earth to granite hardness,
She should rest then on her laurels
'Till the springtime comes her way?

Still we love you, Dixie Winter,
As half springtime you go sporting
Pelting us with sleet at evening—
Then—as if to make atonement
Or but, perhaps, to see us smiling—
Pour floods of sunshine all next day.

But when comes your mood repentant—
Fields so green and sky all cloudless
Frost at morn and starlight evening
Filled between with warmth and sunshine—
Then you bind us with your shackles
And can lead us where you may.

SPRING AGAIN

Comes again now the gay springtime,
With its flashes of bright sunshine
Through the teardrops from the heavens,
Bringing joy to blade and flower.

Again is heard the cooing lovenote
Of the songster in the willow,
Telling yet again the story
Of his fondness for his mate.

Gentle zephyr lashed to madness,
Then subsiding to a whisper
As the shades of night time gather
Over greening hill and dale.

All the night folks in mad revel,
Each his happiness proclaiming,
Each a separate story telling
Of the joy the time has brought.

Grass and flowers and birds and insects
Sweetly smiling or exclaiming
O'er the blessing of the springtime
That's returned to earth once more.

OLD YEAR ADIEU—1913

Old Year, you've been a partner true,
Given each of us some work to do;
Caused each to think of faithful friend,
And for thought gone wrong to make amend.
Taught each to do some kindly deed,
Give aid to fellowman in need,
Warned each that time is on the way,
And tasks best done are done to-day.
Indeed, you've been a partner true.
So now we bid you fond adieu.

PART TWO

FLIRTING WITH MOTHER EVE

Mother Eve in an early day
Stole Father Adam's heart away,
Made him eat an apple ripe and red,
The juice from which went to his head.
These lines were penned lest we forget
She's at her tricks still—even yet.

EYES OF BLUE

Men rave of the blue of an evening sky
 With its fringe of gold and gray;
Of the blue of a lake midst the mountains high
 Where sunbeams make merry all day;
Of the wealth of blue of a summer sea,
 At eve when the ships steam away,

But the blue of the sky or the blue of a lake,
 Or the blue of a summer sea,
Mean naught to one who has seen the blue
 In two eyes that look up at me,
Those eyes so blue, kind, sparkling, true;
 In them almost heaven I see.

ST. VALENTINE

Above the sordid things of life
Are realms where thoughts are prone to stray
And feel a touch of heaven's delight
Though all around be cold and gray

Foes of the heart may curse and rave
And seek to force an entrance here
Where—in halls of gilt and white—
Are treasures that our souls hold dear.

But hate and other sins unnamed
See but a cloud of darkest night
And go their way on hell's own road,
When just o'er head are stars and light.

One key alone— a golden key—
Gives access to this treasure store;
Love lights the portals and makes plain
Where hangs the key above the door.

This mystic home of heart's delight—
Where joy is host and serves love's wine—
Has a guardian staunch and true,
Known as good St. Valentine.

THE TAR HEEL GIRL

In an inland Tar Heel City
Dwells a lady, charming, witty,
Brighter than a Summer morn,
More gentle than its breezes borne.

Fair her cheeks as springtime roses,
Sweet her lips as wildwood posies,
The beauty of her spirit gives
A taste of Eden where she lives.

Not all her world is filled with play
But boasts some service every day.
She's more precious than any pearl
This bewildering, puzzling, Tar Heel girl.

A SOUTHPORT VALENTINE

Where old ocean murmurs soft and low,
Or bellows, fiercely, with blow on blow,
Where live oaks rear their heads serene,
And dull sad winter clothed with green;
Where sea-gulls wing their merry flight,
'Twixt sea and sky as streaks of white;
There, in a town above the quay,
Dwell mesdames fair and maidens gay.
For these this wish is truly mine,
That each may be a valentine.

EYES OF GRAY

Through Summer heat or Winter cold
The gray eyed girls, with courage bold,
Will march straight on and win the prize
O'er girls with brown, or pale blue eyes.

For vision goes with eyes of gray,
Obstructions on life's broad pathway
Are brushed aside as feather tossed,
And vantage gained is seldom lost.

In eyes of gray, too, lurk much fun
And when the sterner tasks are done—
When life takes on a holiday—
Then watch out for those eyes of gray.

THE MEANEST THING I EVER DID

What's the meanest thing I ever did?
Well, it happened when I, only just a kid,
Was sleighing one cold December night,
With a sweet little girl with eyes so bright.

By some means she'd seized the chance
To make Old Jim hop, skip and dance,
When—on the run along a hill—
We struck a rock and took a spill.

Then over the hill we youngsters shot,
And the pace we set was plenty hot,
The swiftest bird in its merry flight
Could have learned from us that Winter night.

Stopping at last in a monster drift
I pulled her out with a tender lift,
Thinking that all was then serene
With never a thought of anything mean.

But as she stood below that hill—
With much snow down her collar still—
She, with a look, began to talk,
And I stood like a country gawk.

And with ears tingling and eyes aflame
Said "Hush! for you were all to blame.
For you it was who were driving, see,
And now you're laying it onto me."

Oh! could I have had the wit to say,
"Just wait till those tears I've wiped away
And brushed the snow from your beautiful throat,"
I might then have been in a different boat.

LOVE BY PROXY

Tales of love are most unfitting
From men with hair turned silvery gray,
Theirs to find a quiet corner—
Near a blazing wood fire say,
Or on a path through smiling valley,
With mountain peaks not far away,—
There to dream of long past frolics
When youth made life a holiday.

But should Old Father Time in mercy
Forget for just one passing day
And me slip off for once the knowledge
Of the debt old age must surely pay,
Methinks that words near kin' to love words
Might from my lips be winged away
To a charming neighbor lassie,
Coming four years old some near by day.

But alas, alack, 'tis but a fancy
Time plays not jolly trick that way
The hand of time grows never weary
And dogs grown old have had their day.
Still though it might be worth the trying
To joke Old Father Time some way.
How would this work, to take some youngster
And teach him just the words to say?

To teach him how to tell the story
Of eyes that haunt one all the day;
Of lips that tempt one and beguile one
And cause one's will to swerve and sway.
There's just one thing, though, as I see it
Might make my work like sodden clay
Those lips he might attempt to smother
And she not wish to say him nay.

EYES OF GREEN

In the sandy Eastern country,
Where grows the long leaf yellow pine,
There dwells an earnest lady teacher
Who stimulates like rare old wine.

Crowned she is with dark brown tresses,
Her eyes *she* vows are shades of green,
But to *me*—well versed in such things—
They're most the finest ever seen.

A VALENTINE

I wonder if my lady fine
Would care aught for a valentine
From one who thinks most wondrous fair
Her bonnie eyes, her dark brown hair;
Her lips that tempt one to despair,
Her cheeks the color of the dawn,
Her form as graceful as a fawn?
If so, this is her valentine,
For she's a partner true of mine.

ADVICE TO ONE WHO WINS A WIFE

A man who wins a little wife
Need never think he's done with strife,
For, first one thing and then another
Will make him wish to "run to cover."

But when he's near where cover was—
About to whisper sly ha-ha's—
What will his discomfort be
To find his cover "up a tree."

And wifie on a lower limb,
Smiling her sweetest down at him,
Just hoping her suggestions fine
May with his notions be in line.

"Oh yes! yes, yes! just so, just so!"
He might as well let the matter go.
And let *his* joys play a minor part.
To wifie's joys from the very start.

THE FAIREST FLOWERS

Not in country lane or garden
Does one always find the flower
That to him appeals most strongly
In his recreation hour.

But ofttimes in lonely village,
Or even midst the city's roar,
Will he find a fragrant blossom
That will appeal to him far more.

Nor do we find the flower most lovely
Always in some shaded glen,
But more oft in field or garden,
Where mad storms and sun have been

So, too, is it with our fair ones—
Those we're pleased to call our "betters"—
Some of these do madly chatter,
And others write the sweetest letters.

But, kind sir, these are but samples
Of how ladies fair may grow
When they lack the poise and purpose
Of real, true, women here below.

Thought and work give to our fair ones
Eyes that speak a language stronger
Than do the eyes of helpless infants
Infants, though in arms no longer.

So here's to the thinking fair one,
She with eyes that sparkle brighter
Because her brain is like a bee hive
While she bangs on her typewriter.

A VALENTINE

From out the land of Long Leaf Pine
My heart cries out for those of mine
At "Sunny Home"—where fields are green,
Where streams run deep and swift and clean,
Where cattle low and lambs are gay,
Where Summer brings the scent of hay.
To those this simple note of mine
Reminds of good St. Valentine.

EYES OF BROWN

Here's to the girl with eyes so brown,
Her word is law to the lads in town;
With lips so—well, so very sweet,
The one safe course is swift retreat;
With cheeks so wondrous fair,
That dimples leave with jealous stare,
But return again and claim the place
Of the most bewitching in the race.

THINGS WE FEAR AND THOSE WE FEAR NOT

The tasks we've done
Are those we fear not—
Hate, perhaps, or with joy recall.
But those same life tasks,
When once we know them,
Are like whiskey punch at an Irish ball.

The feats that daunt—
Before which we tremble—
When on life's path they loom ahead
Are those our ignorance
Has clothed in wonder.
Than these aught else we'd choose instead.

The pains we've known
We can bear tomorrow.
But let the morrow its portion mete
And we'll, as staunch
Soldiers of ill fortune,
Take what's our due with courage replete.

The joys we've known—
Were they joys most truly—
We would meet again some other day.
We would take of life
A portion double
Of the elixir that drives old age away.

But the loves we've known—
Ah! those loves, my laddie—
They've led us many a fearsome way,
But still there's that
In their elusive sweetness
That calls us back when we think to stray.

CHERRIES

Cherries, plucked in early morning,
While on each fruit a night kiss lingers;
Cherries to their stems still clinging,
Plucked for you by friendly fingers.

Cherries red and firm and juicy,
Fresh from out their orchard bower;
Cherries—fruits the gods prize highly—
Plucked for you this morning hour.

LUCY DIX AND MISS ESTELLE

In an old Virginia village,
Undisturbed by train or bell,
Dwell two charming, dark haired maidens,
Lucy Dix and Miss Estelle.

Blithesome, gay and happy ever,
Eyes deep blue—'tis truth I tell—
Can one find a pair more lovely than
Lucy Dix and Miss Estelle?

Studious, kind and wondrous clever,
Cheeks that fairly cast a spell,
Not soon again will we find the equal of
Lucy Dix and Miss Estelle.

BLOOMING AND FRUITING

When some years hence—
 some April day—
These cherries bloom
 and festoons gay
Hang from each limb
 like balls of snow,
Should all go right
 you then may know
That among the boughs
 some day e'er long
Will sound the note
 of the robins song.
'Tis then you'd best
 send Peter out
And order him to
 “turn about”
And pick those cherries
 ripe and red
Before the robins
 get ahead.

NOTE—Sent to a lady with a bundle of cherry trees.

FOUR TOMATOES

In a wondrous sunny garden,
Up above the valley Dan,
Stalked a fair, determined lady,
Carrying in her hand a pan.

Stooping often, ever searching,
All along a fruiting row,
At last she pounced upon a treasure,
A great big, fleshy tomato.

“That,” she ’lowed, “is just the checker.
If find three more I only can
I will take them as a present
To that shaking, chilling man.”

They came, those great, red, husky beauties;
Came and conquered in a walk,
And in conquering filled the shaker
So he scarce could even talk.

But his mind kept working smoothly
After speech had all but failed,
And thoughts of her who brought the “tomats”
Were the ones that most prevailed.

A WIFE'S VALENTINE

A valentine I send to you,
Across the hills o'er waters blue,
From eastern sands to Piedmont hills,
To you whose love my whole life fills.

A valentine, a loving call,
To you across the hills—that's all.

PART THREE

STORIES

Simple stories gathered daily
From life's rose or thorn-strewn way;
Events we've had a hand in shaping
While at tasks both stern and gay,
Joys we've known and laughed o'er gaily
As they've met us face to face.
Pains we've felt when friend and kindred
Have fallen out in time's swift race.
Things we've seen that left us mirth^{er}-filled
Or gave to hearts a flood of pain;
Hopes we've had for fellow toiler
As he fell then rose again.

SONGS TO BE WRITTEN

(November, 1918)

From out the wild year
That has passed and gone
Have come stirring events
To preserve in song—
Stories of love
And stories of hate;
Stories of letters
That came too late.
Tales of shot
And bursting shell;
Of deeds that shamed
Even blackest hell.

Of fights that were fought
In sleet and rain;
Of suffering endured—
On trucks or train,
In prison camp
Or in trenches deep—
Where in mire and filth
Only dead men sleep—
In hospital tent
Or under the stars—
By Doughboys young
Or blue clad Tars.

Of events that transpired
In "No Man's Land,"
When foe met foe
Fighting hand to hand,
Leaving their dead
In the mud where they fell;
Pressing straight on—
As though courting hell—
Midst scenes lighted up
By the strong lurid glare
Of rockets exploding
High in mid air.

Of King men who fought
O'er the clouds high hung—
Only God to witness
When their work was done;
Or when, foeman conquered,
He was dashed to earth
On the graves of the dead
Or on war-ruined hearth—
Brave men one and all,
Whether foeman or friend,
Who flew through the heavens
And fought to the end

A Farmer's Musings

Of mothers who prayed
Every night and all day,
For the loved ones of theirs
From homes far away;
In war-tortured France,
Or on the wide sea,
Their petition—tear freighted:
Bring him back safe to me;
Bring him back 'cross the water,
'Cross the sub-ridden sea;
When he's finished his mission
Bring my soldier to me.

THE BORDER BOOK CLUB

On border where the North State
Meets Virginia's verdant hills;
Where the hum of loom and spindle
Vies with laughing rippling rills;
Where pastures green and meadows
Spread serene on every hand—
Enhancing e'en the beauty
Of the Eden Garden land—
There's a band of charming women,
Matrons fair and maidens gay,
Of whose work, with words of music,
Am I asked to speak today.

Banded as "The Border Book Club,"
A score of years almost ago;
Seekers after social pleasures—
Men folks left at home you know—
Or delving in the mystic caverns
Where dwell the ghosts of great ones gone—
Men who've taught the world a lesson
In statesmanship or work or song
Or with masterstroke on canvas
Fixed the vision of their age.
Or of others, none less able,
Word picture writers for the stage.

Then to ease up on the gray stuff—
 Just to fluff it up a bit—
Dive then into fiction's water,
 Such an earnest plunging dip.
Rising to the surface calmly
 With some writer's scalp to land
Make him wish he'd kept to plowing
 Instead of taking pen in hand.
Then some other—whose real genius
 Marks him as a great pen fiend—
May sigh and thank his stars so lucky
 That he's escaped from being beaned.

Then anon, back to the present,
 With its task but started well.
The rise of nations all astagger
 From out the depth of war's mad hell
Sneaking, bolshevistic horror—
 Child of madness and decay—
When should reign calm, sane, reason
 That leads us civilization's way;
That gives to every human creature,
 With God's plain mark upon his brow,
The right to visions from the hilltop,
 With none to thwart or question how.

Lucky Border, Lucky Eden,
Lucky all, I well may say,
When within our charming quarter,
Working there so forcefully,
Bides this band combining wisdom,
Social charm—degree untold—
Helpfulness to those about them,
Promptings of their hearts of gold.
Storms may gather, small or mighty,
Evil reign, while bad men gloat
But this club along the border
Methinks will steady hold the boat.

WHO KNOWS

I stood on the sands of Carolina's Coast

At the close of a Winter's day,

And watched the sun sink away to rest

And the dolphins sport on old ocean's breast

And the sea gulls dart and play

At my back was the river where it meets the shock

Of the ocean waves rolled high,

And the fort at my left, where the evening gun

Boomed forth the call that the day was done

And the night was drawing nigh.

To my right was the town—made so old and gray

By the sun and storms so grand—

And the live oaks tall that lined the street

And the footprints, small, made by children's feet

In the deep light yellow sand.

'Neath my feet was the wreck of an ocean craft

That had passed the long, long way.

And the hopes she held as she plowed the waves

And the brave men she sent to watery graves.

Who of us that know today?

FROM BOONE TO BLOWING ROCK

Out from Boone the road leads, winding
Past shady banks and gurgling springs;
Past rock-faced hills, so bleak and staring—
Save where the rhododendron clings.

A fine road this, through old Wautauga—
A good man's proof of work well done—
The winding way from out the Blue Ridge
Toward the land of rising sun.

Traveled once—past orchard, meadow;
Past rock-faced hills and fertile plain,
O'er rushing stream, through smiling valley—
The traveler longs to come again.

The moments pass one all too quickly
As mile on mile he leaves behind;
Then presently from out before him
There breaks a view almost sublime.

Few other roads throughout the "North State"
May boast such beauty, by the way,
And none there are can show at ending
Such wide, magnificent display.

A hundred miles of grass green valleys,
Tree clad hills and rolling plain.
A million years of beauty making
Lying within one's vision's range.

'Tis this one sees beneath him lying
As on the "blowing rock" he stands
And if e'er place can show more beauty
It's not been seen in Eastern lands.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

(26th President of the United States)

One of earth's great ones
At the time when his mind
Was reaching above toward
Its zenith of power,
Faltered a moment
In his journey last night,
Then his soul rushed away
Toward the mansion of light.

The world is in mourning,
And good cause have earth's people
To be bowed in deep grief
O'er the event of the night,
For all men are made poorer
By their loss, in a way,
Of the strong valiant warrior,
Whom we're mourning today.

Death, with his sickle,
When cutting his swath
Through the ranks of the great
Has many laid low.
Oft times has he taken
His toll from our nation
Men mourned for themselves
And because of their station.

But seldom in stalking
Abroad on his mission
Of gathering the great
From the ends of the earth,
Has he chose such a sample
Of man earth would keep,
As this patriot, this world man,
Who's now fallen asleep.

We're mourning today,
Will more on the morrow
When we learn the full worth
Of him who has gone.
His power of uplifting,
His vision, his kindness,
Will dispel as by knife thrust
Our meanness, our blindness.

So while he is absent
He's still ever with us;
His life an example
To leaders of men.
His spirit left with us
As a sword from high heaven
Will guide us and guard us
And the whole lump will leaven.

MOTOR BOATING IN WINTER

For Salem our party made a start,
With laugh and jest and merry heart,
While yet the day was young and fair,
And the salt sea breath was in the air.

The little open motor boat
Called loud for wraps and overcoat,
For the winter morn was clear and cold
To mariners, both fair and bold.

When out upon the river broad
Naught else could one do save applaud
The gallant little river steed
That rushed us on with steady speed.

For twelve long miles o'er waters blue
The engine did her duty true,
And not one time did she rebel,
So outward bound no harm befell.

At 4 P. M.—the good byes said—
The party to the wharf we led,
And turned the little boat to run
Homeward toward the setting sun.

And none a straw in her path did lay
For 'twas bitter cold at the close of day,
And every one, each saint and sinner,
Had mind set on mine host's good dinner.

But soon the engine seemed nonplussed,
We wondered not that ladies fussed,
Declaring they "just couldn't wait
A mile from shore and it getting late."

We cranked her, primed her—cussed her, too—
But still she couldn't or wouldn't do
And finally we poled her back to shore,
Another hired, and deemed trouble o'er.

But when we got to water deep
The new boat failed her word to keep
And left us worse off than before,
For now we were two miles from shore.

And cold the night and dark and drear
And dinner time gone past us clear,
And we, sitting in that open boat,
Wondering what had the engine's goat.

Then all at once, no reason giving,
She started off toward better living,
Then smiles and jokes began to play
And trouble fled from us away.

And we talked about a fine milk stew,
Then have some fried and a good tea brew,
And a sirloin steak, and a bit of fish,
And about every other restaurant dish.

So after all 'tis not so bad
To have your boat turn out a cad,
For it ensures an appetite,
Which, satisfied, makes one all right.

WAKEMAN'S HUNDRED YEARS

(1817-1917)

Came five strangers one glad springtime,
To where a river silvery glows
Between majestic elms and beeches
Bending from their stately pose;
Bending till their sweeping branches
Kiss the water as it flows.

Came those strangers from the eastward,
From a rocky barren land.
A sturdy band, courageous, willing,
Strong of heart and head and hand;
Strong to meet the perils many
Lurking in the forest grand.

Strove they well with axe and cant-hook
Reared them cabins hewn from log,
Cleared a space and planted gardens,
Raised their meat with gun and dog;
Raised a living for their children,
Made their law the decalogue.

Fought their wives the battles bravely
That come to every pioneer.
And as the years moved slowly onward
Kept their vision strong and clear;
Kept the vision of the broad life—
For their children prized most dear.

*NOTE—The author's great-grandfather, Silas French, was one of a party of five who made the first settlement at Wakeman, Ohio, in 1817.

So came a schoolhouse in the forest,
Simple as the cabins all,
And gathered there the children ever
With the coming of the fall;
With the coming of the harvest,
When was heard the blackbird's call.

Others came, and yet still others
Came to join this sturdy band
To make their home, to rear their children
In this fertile western land;
In this land where suns are kindly
To aid the farmers skillful hand.

Came a church, too, in due season,
Built beside a giant oak;
Modest—for these were modest people,
These sons of staunch New England folk;
These men who to their God bowed meekly
But spurned the thought of human yoke.

And in this church each Sabbath morning,
From week to week and year to year,
Were taught those truths—those simple doctrines—
The true New Englander held dear;
The doctrines that through all the centuries,
Have brought their gift of hope and cheer.

So flowed the lives of these strong people,
As flow the lives of workers ever;
Planting, reaping, trading, building,
Pushing onward, idle never;
Pushing toward a higher standard
Singly or, more oft, together.

Then came to these, as come to others
Across our wide and favored land,
The call to arms to save the nation
Their sires had vowed should ever stand;
The call of Lincoln—stern, heroic,
With heart of love and courage grand.

How well these men, these sons of woodmen,
Served their country all know well.
Four years of battle, camp and prison
To many tolled the parting knell,
To many brought the long, sound slumber—
A story sad indeed to tell.

Then came those years—those fifty golden,
Fruitful, happy, precious, years—
When workers strove with faces forward;
Time for naught of idle fears;
Time for ringing blows struck squarely
Against those wrongs that harbor tears.

Wakeman's men, at work, in business,
 Themselves have proved the best man's peer;
Her women though have been her fortress
 Through guarding well the home life dear
By standing guard beside the fountain,
 To keep its flowings pure and clear.

Their sons have gone to East, to Westward,
 South where the cotton blooms so fair;
Have built their place with Yankee courage
 Facing grim odds with a bonny air;
Facing the world with calm assurance,
 Because of the sturdy blood they bear.

You builded well, men from the Eastward,
 Your work was done long years ago;
But 'twill live in this good country
 So long as waters gaily flow.
So long as men love right and courage
 Your work will live, God wills it so.

THE TREASURE PART

A backward glance across the years
When we're on life's hilltop standing
Gives a measure true of the things worth while
Of the thoughts that were worth thinking—
If we hold the heart as the treasure part
Of the house in which we are living.

Not a day that past on the journey up
Through the year's resistless forcing
But holds a gem for our treasure store,
But recalls a past we would live again,
If we held the heart as the treasure part,
Of the house in which we were living.

Blown from the waste of straw and chaff
By the breath of the years in passing
Comes the hopes we held for our fellow man
As he faltered and fell but climbed again,
If we held the heart as the treasure part
Of the house in which we were living.

A glance ahead toward the journey's end
With the past enlightened vision
Should reveal the chance for a life made great
Through faith and work and courage strong
If we hold the heart as the Treasure part
Of the house in which we are living.

WHAT MEANS OUR FLAG

What means our flag—
As unconquered still
Waves its stripes of red
And its stars of white
 O'er our broad rich land from sea to sea—
 What means that flag to you and me?

Does the sight of the flag
Our fathers loved
And for which they fought
In years gone by
Inspire in us the purpose strong
 To guard that flag from every harm
 With our wealth, our men and our strong right arm?

Does it mean the same
As in years that passed
Before our men—some millions strong—
From factory, shop, office and farm,
 Steamed away across the wide, deep sea
 To preserve a nation for you and me?

Does it mean as much
As it ought to mean
Since our flag was raised
On the soil of France
 With the stern resolve it should not be furled
 'Till we'd paid our debt to a Hun cursed world?

Will it mean the same
 In the years to come
 When we feel not the spur
 Of our present task.

Will our blood grow cool and our minds forget
 That e'en a greater work is before us yet?

Will our heads be bowed
 In unmeasured shame
 As we see our flag
 Trailed in the mire

And all that's past become as naught
 Because we shirked the task we early sought?

No, it cannot be—
 O'er sea and land
 With steady heart
 And strong courage

We'll build a nation that men may know
 Will protect its own where'er they go.

And in the years to come
 Whate'er betide—
 Should the world go mad
 With lust and greed—

Men will find in ours a nation strong,
 For she feared but God as she forged along.

O'er this favored land
 Between the seas
 A flag shall wave
 Its colors strong

And proclaim that men both fight and pray
 In the United States of America.

THE NAMELESS WRECK

A battered, shattered hulk she lies
On the beaten sand so high,
Her name? 'Tis a secret of the sea,
And with the sea will die.

Long days and nights of calm or storm—
While a stern fate drove her on—
She rode the waves a cold sea corpse,
Like a wraith from the great beyond.

Spar by spar and plank by plank,
She gave to the hungry sea,
'Til her heart lay bare to the cruel waves,
Then they cast her off with glee.

Storms now may rage and waves roar on,
She scorns their taunting boast,
For she lies at rest, in her grave of sand,
On our North Carolina coast.

STOLEN FRUIT

'Twas the morning hour,
And with laughter gay,
We drove past the oaks,
And were well on our way,
Towards the wood on the hill
Where the scaley barks grow
And fall, sprinkling the earth
As with pellets of snow.

Our road was some gullied
And bordered with briars,
But Trixy was willing,
And our rubber tires
Rolled smoothly along
And no harm befell,
Though how we got lost once,
I perhaps ought to tell

And of how we wandered,
Without purpose or rule—
Ever followed about
By Aunt Anna's old mule—
Among stumps and through gullies,
And ugly thorn patches,
Which Trixy took bravely,
Though covered with scratches.

Soon, though, we righted
And were off with a dash,
Through corn field and pasture
And through branches kersplash
Past a herd of fine cattle,
At rest in the shade;
Past flocks of gay backbirds,
In wild serenade.

Now, by great stealth,
Must we farther proceed,
And to ever strange noise
Stop and give closest heed;
For we're now in the realm
Of the scaley Bark King
Whose rule is that pickers
Must the half to him bring.

And some may have followed
This rule to the letter,
But for us we'd a plan
We thought would work better.
It was this,
And I ask if you think it not good,
Just to gather our share,
Leaving his in the wood.

And this plan we followed,
For an hour and a half
Picking and sacking,
With a joke and a laugh,
And stopping a minute,
When we got most too hot,
To crack a few scaley barks,
Right on the spot.

A Farmer's Musings

She filled her hat full,
And I likewise my lid,
And I told her true stories
Of how, when a kid,
I got into devilment,
As only boys can;
How once I stole melons
From a poor swearing man.

And she told—no she didn't;
For it just isn't done,
Thought it 'twere I've no doubt,
'Twould be very good fun
To learn of the frolics
And flirtations withstood,
By the Lady who traveled
With me to the wood.

She had promised her hubby
We'd be back by midday
And as time had been speeding
We must "up and away"
So down through the pasture,
Where much cattle roam,
We took our way gaily
The longest road home.

BACK, WAR GOD

(1914)

Back! thou stern, relentless War God,
Keep thy grip from off my land,
Naught hast thou, save sorrow only,
Carrying in thy gnarled hand.

What hast thou to mankind given,
In the ages that have past,
Save a torn and shattered manhood?
A work that has e'en hell outclassed.

Not content with plain destruction
Of the present sturdy breed
Thou dost damn all future peoples
With a weakened, puny seed

Gold we would not withhold from thee
Would give it o'er with but a sigh;
Our men, though we prize more highly
For them we'll fight you 'till we die.

Back! give heed to voices many,
Murmuring prayers from sea to sea,
Back! or by the Lord eternal,
Humanity shall deal with thee.

CHAPPEL MILL POND

In the country of my boyhood,
Where blue grass covers bluff and dell,
Flows a famous large sized brooklet,
Named by Indian "La Chappel."

In the boy days of my father,
When the farms were newly born,
The waters of this creek were harnessed
And made to grind the farmers' corn.

And how well do I remember—
Oft-times I've met it in a dream—
The remains of an old mill dam,
A staunch, protruding old "big beam."

Hewn from heart of oaken monarch,
While yet Red Men roamed the wood,
This beam, for half a century,
Marked the spot where the mill had stood.

Down below the great thick sill beam,
In the days when I was young,
Was the dark and silent "deep hole"
Where many a sturdy lad was flung.

For those were lads of hardened muscles,
Those lads, who, at the close of day,
Gathered at the Chappel Mill Pond,
To wash the grime of toil away.

And woe betide the timid youngster
Who on the beam would hesitate,
His case was called by one next to him,
'Twas useless to expostulate.

In the winter Chappel's waters
Would be frozen hard and fast
And sometimes well into April
Have I known the ice to last.

At last would come the time long looked for—
The water feeling warm and good,
To fingers calloused hardened,
From carrying corn and kindling wood.

And the word would go forth quickly
Over hills from farm to farm,
That the sun smiling on Chappel
And ushered in its time of charm.

Pride of place was claimed each springtime
By the lad who, hot of blood,
Would be first in all the region
To plunge into the ice cold flood.

And when he with eyes a-popping,
Emerged from out the depth of cold,
The next in line must follow quickly,
Or give his place to one more bold.

Competition for first honors,
Was one spring extremely keen,
And two lads—just little fellows,
Appeared quite early on the scene.

Standing on the great beam shaking,
From the chill of April air,
Straws were called on to determine
Which should first the water dare.

The younger laddie—fat and rugged—
When to him the portion fell,
Struck the water like a rocket,
And how it hurt would never tell.

With goose flesh his skin fair wrinkled,
But still he swam and dove about,
Until the older, slimmer laddie,
Had made his plunge with nervous shout.

Then out he scrambled, up the creek bank,
Crossed the pasture clear and wide,
For distance now was all could save him,
And were he caught then woe betide.

Flow on Chappel, flow on good waters,
Give other sturdy lads at play
The same good times you gave to this lad
Who's now a thousand miles away.

WORK

Work! at break of day,
When the day grows hot
Then make work play.
Work! Strive! still work
When the shadows fall.
Yes, work! 'tis drones who shirk.

Work at desk or plow;
Make your life work count—
Care not just how.
Work! Life is a field
All beauteous white,
Yes, work! only weaklings yield.

Work at a comrade's side
Or strong and alone—
For the world is wide;
But work with a will
With eyes to the fore,
Yes, work! 'tis rust that will kill.

Work with a merry song,
Though the task be hard
And the day grown long.
Keep the thought in mind
'Tis a game I play
Yes, work! don't be left behind.

A TALE OF COWEE MOUNTAIN

Toward the West of Carolina—
Where flows the Little Tennessee—
There stands a grand old Mountain,
Known to all as the Cowee.

Tales are told of this old Mountain
Weird and wild as tales can be,
But one and all are her scars now hidden
By her beauty of rock and tree.

This beauty at dawn is all compelling
And bids one's soul set trouble free,
Her beauty at eve is a burst of glory,
Inspiring in its majesty.

Many a love has Cowee fostered,
In her coves so fair and free,
Undisturbed by the world's distractions—
Loves strong and pure as loves e'er be.

Hates too may perchance be hidden
In Cowee's more rugged wilder way;
Hates that smoke and burn and flame
If left to draw a hates true pay.

Long ago 'twas told of Cowee,
That along her dark secluded streams
Curls of smoke would at times be noticed,
Rising through the foliage green.

And to the modest mountain cottage,
Nestling at old Cowee's base,
Would come the deadly, stealthy serpent—
The same old one with smiling face.

Sad faced then were the Cowee women
And poorly clothed did the children be,
Farms neglected, cattle wandering
Along the banks of the Tennessee.

But better times are now on Cowee—
Times that make her people free—
Curbed has been the whiskey demon
And backward on the run is he.

Triumphant now stands Cowee mountain,
Guarded well her children be;
A grander, stronger, happier Cowee
Than when she first was known to me.

**THE CLOSE OF NINETEEN HUNDRED AND
EIGHTEEN**

(Christmas, 1918)

At the end of the world's most tempestuous year—
When the earth was clothed with a fullness of fear;
 When the sea was filled with silence of hate
 When the sky learned tales no tongue can relate—
Comes a peace, that months have grudgingly held;
Comes a peace our doubts and fears has dispelled;
 Comes a glorious peace, with victory crowned,
 Bringing hope and good cheer the wide world around.

Oh, praise to the God who brought peace to the earth,
Who dispelled the war storm and gave freedom rebirth,
 Who fought on the side of the lovers of men
 And from chaos brought honor and order again;
The same mighty God, who long years ago
Gave his son to the earth—a prince here below—
 Gave him a free gift—a God gift indeed—
 Who will stand at the bar and for us intercede.

A TALE OF LONG AGO

In a humble vine-clad cottage
Close beside a rushing stream,
Dwelt a gray haired melon grower,
Owner of a spanking team.

None in all that famous region—
Where melons reach their best estate—
Could a finer fruit deliver,
Or a better tale relate.

And had you, in hurrying homeward,
Thought to pass his Arab steeds,
You'd best have taken a second thought,
For Otis was a man of deeds.

And no one, whate'er his calling,
Or what his great apparent rush,
Could slip on by that team of Arabs
Without the hottest little brush.

Otis' faults—Oh, yes, he had them,
Though not of the basest sort—
Consisted of a knack for cussing,
And of mighty sharp retort.

The boys about—I ne'er would tell it
Were it not long years ago—
Would manage ways to hector Otis,
Just to hear him cuss and blow.

One night in windy cold December—
They bound his wheels with lock and chain,
And then laid low to hear what happened,
I promise you 'twas some profane.

“Boys will be boys”—you’ve surely heard it—
And Otis claimed they’d be it twice,
And other things he said about them
That were filled with truth and spice.

There’d been a deal of melon stealing—
A thing that Otis couldn’t stand—
And he vowed he’d catch the youngsters
And they’d feel his weighty hand.

So he fixed him up a goods box,
Close beside the melon field,
And—with his trusty muzzle loader
Crouched within quite well concealed.

But his years played him most scurvy,
Though of this he’d never peep,
And, instead of watchful waiting,
He fell into the soundest sleep.

Then up crept two sturdy youngsters,
Faces spoiled with evil grin—
And upset the mighty goods box,
Prisoning Otis there within.

Then with zeal—the sort most common,
Where some fun is recompense—
They weighed down the goods box firmly,
With rocks from off a nearby fence.

Now, do not think, not for a moment,
That Otis had been calm this while,
Far from it, hot streams of cursing
Were issuing from beneath that pile.

And very soon the midnight silence
Was shattered by an awful blast,
The muzzle loader was in action,
And that report was not the last.

For Otis, wild with shame and anger,
Vowing he'd settle soon and good,
Fired toward each sound of snickers,
Until that box was kindling wood.

The neighbors, attracted by the firing,
Came on the run to Otis' aid,
Then when they had heard his story,
Other compliments were paid.

Little heed was given these rantings
By youngsters struggling through the loam,
Their thoughts were on the lights that beckoned
From their distant home, sweet home.

THE MISER

At the foot of a frowning rock-faced hill
Stands the wreck of an old time flouring mill
Where, in an early pioneer day,
Lived a miller strong, though old and gray.

Of the miller, little was ever known
Save that he lived at the mill alone;
A silent man who owned not a friend,
Who worked for gold and no other end.

One night there passed that lonesome way
A sailor man from a ship in the bay—
A gay young lad with his life before—
And 'tis thought he stopped at the old mill door.

When he left his ship that day in May
He carried with him full six months pay,
The stock of gold he had worked to save
As he rode his ship o'er the bounding wave.

A hundred years almost have flown
Since the sailor went to the mill alone,
And though search was made for miles around
No trace of him or his gold was found.

The years rolled on and the miller gray
Passed over the river on the dark highway;
Hit the trail that leads to the miser's end
And was buried alone in the river bend.

Another miller repairing the mill
Found a door beneath the great main sill,
And in a box, made gray with mould,
There lay the miser's hoarded gold.

He had lived his life without a friend
Was thought to have caused the sailor's end,
Had naught to show for his life all told
Save a buried box of muddy gold.

THE MAN ON THE LAND

Down the path of the years
That our country has gone
On her quest of an ideal
Or when righting a wrong,
When on the crest of the wave
Or in deepest distress,
When fighting for self
Or for brother oppressed,
There has stood at her back
With her fate in his hand,
As a rock in the storm,
 The man on the land.

His tasks ever heavy,
His enjoyments too few;
The weather his comrade
Or stealing his due;
His labor uncertain—
If labor he's had
Save labor of self,
In good weather or bad.
His life isolated—
Almost alone does he stand,
This saver of nations,
 The man on the land.

He has fought evil doing.
As a class he has stood
For measures that enacted;
Helped his country make good,
He's grumbled at times,
When good reason he's had,
But when unable to change it
Looked for good in the bad.
Just look up his record—
In my opinion 'twill stand—
And you'll value more highly
 The man on the land.

A demand he will make
In the time that's to come
For a just recognition
Of the work he has done:
Of the place his work holds
Among the things that endure
His motives unselfish
Powerful and pure.
For 'tis proved that nations
Will fall or will stand
By the position accorded
 The man on the land.

A Farmer's Musings

No favors are wanted,
But he's standing four-square
For the same honest dealing
Sought by men everywhere:
A chance at the markets
In every free land
At the just price accorded
To supply and demand.
And then in his buying
On this platform he'll stand:
No extortionate prices
 To the man on the land.

Give him in his business
The justice that's due,
And no need to worry
O'er the course he'll pursue.
For with cash in his pocket
And respect in his soul
He'll work out his problem
And come to the goal
With a life so well rounded
And so well held in hand
That all will do honor
 To the man on the land.

CHRISTMAS INVOCATION—1914

Kingly God child—gift from Heaven—
Thy day of birth we hail this morn,
Breathe on us thy christening spirit,
Bring joy and hope to those forlorn.

Kingly God child—gift from Heaven—
With majesty and glory crowned,
Charge us with thy loving message
Of “peace on earth” the wide world round.

THE HARVEST

The harvest moon of 1918 sheds light on scenes such as human eye has never before looked upon, and the glory of the harvest lighted up, means more to humanity than have any of the harvests that have gone before in all the ages. A billion human beings and their descendants may be made free by the harvest that is now upon us, or be bound with the autocrat's chains, depending upon how turns the harvest. Ten million soldier boys and millions of men and women who, while serving humanity with every waking thought, with all the power of lives consecrated to as great a cause as ever moved men since the coming of the Son of God, are looking with hope to the ripening of the golden crop, every grain of which is more precious than grains of purest gold. Great generals—minds freighted with the supreme effort of their lives—watch with the utmost anxiety the spreading of the golden wave o'er hill and valley from sea to sea. The commander in chief of the armies of the greatest nation God has yet allowed to grow to manhood's estate is looking off to the wheat fields of the New World for the succor they alone can give to the brave men under his command.

Mothers who have consecrated the life of their lives, the blood of theirs, to the gigantic struggle—the purpose of which is to set humanity free from blood sacrifice—are praying for a harvest bountiful. Fathers, whose hopes of posterity have been laid on the altar of freedom, are pinning their faith to Almighty God, and the golden harvest that is at hand. The lives of millions of little children—who know not the meaning of grim war and who we trust will never again have cause to look upon its desolation—are hanging in the balance that marks the difference between the bountiful and the meager harvest.

God in Heaven—the God of our fathers, who spread manna in the desert—swell that harvest and strengthen the decimated ranks of the reapers, that this swelling tide with the golden tinge may sweep on to victory the forces of right.

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